

Jason Fletcher, Yale University

Predictors and Consequences of Early Childhood Overweight

The goal of this paper is to present some stylized facts of the predictors of early child overweight status (at two years old) as well as examine the relationship between early overweight and a range of early child outcomes. First, I show that racial differences in overweight status are found as early as two years of age, but these differences are largely eliminated with a small set of control variables. Second, I corroborate and add to the list of early predictors of early childhood overweight using a national sample of children, controlling for community-level fixed effects. Predictors of early childhood overweight include English as a Second Language (ESL) status, parenting practices (eating at a regular time and playing outside), parental behaviors (e.g. smoking), and several measures of family resources, including insurance status, family structure, and social program participation. Finally, I examine whether early childhood overweight status is associated with measures of motor skills and cognition using variation across and within families but find little robust evidence.